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ABSTRACT

The professional and personal characteristics of the men and women in Phi Delta Kappa who hold the top elected positions in local chapters were compared, and the perceptions of these leaders of the impact of allowing women to be members of Phi Delta Kappa were assessed. A 43-item questionnaire was developed and mailed to 1,340 chapter presidents and vice-presidents, and 894 responses were received. Of this group approximately 70 percent were male, and 30 percent were female. Statistically significant differences in most of the personal data of males and females who hold the top elected offices in local chapters indicate that: (1) more of the females are single than are the males; (2) nearly one-third of the females had no children, as compared to only about one-tenth of the males; (3) while the ages of males and females are comparable, males have more years of experience than females; (4) males tend to hold a higher academic degree than females; and (5) in correspondence to their areas of specialization, more males hold administrative positions than females, while more females than males are teachers. Both males and females felt that they were elected to their positions because of colleague confidence in their leadership abilities. A very slightly higher percentage of females are actively involved in research, while a slightly higher percentage of males have published at least one article in the last two years. Most respondents indicated that they felt that the organization should be coeducational, rather than its previously all male membership. (SW)

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# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES IN PHI DELTA KAPPA

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# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES IN PHI DELTA KAPPA

## Introduction and Purpose

There has been great interest recently in the career woman and the problems she faces in pursuing her career and achieving success. Many speculate on the reasons for the disparity between males and females in their levels of achievement as measured by salaries or job status. Some reasons put forth by Jessee Bernard[1] include the fact that women both in the middle occupations and in the highest levels of employment have not received much encouragement or help from industry or government in the area of child care. In addition, women have had to interrupt or delay careers for child-bearing and rearing at the most inopportune time. In spite of this, Bernard says, in order to succeed, "the career women is required to order her life in complete conformity to the demands of her profession and to pay whatever price is exacted for deviation from them."

A study by Marwell, Rosenfeld, and Spilerman[2] found that marriage and being part of a two career family was a great handicap to women in academia, while a study of female home economics administrators found that children were seen as the largest single disadvantage to career development.[3] However, in a study of female scientists, Roark[4] found the opposite. This study indicated that married women published more than unmarried, and married women with one or two children published more than childless married women. Rourk also found that men and women were treated fairly equitably in this particular profession.

In education, especially higher education, women's low success rate has also been attributed to sexism and subtle discrimination.[5] It has

been claimed that women have less chance than men to assume leadership roles and yet they want to grow in leadership skills and attain posts in local, state, national and international arenas.[6]

Since women now belong to and have an opportunity to assume leadership roles in Phi Delta Kappa, several women educators at Virginia Tech did a comparative study of the professional and personal characteristics of the men and women in Phi Delta Kappa who hold the top elected leadership positions in local chapters, in order to see what similarities and differences existed between them. An additional purpose was to study the perceptions of these leaders of the impact of allowing women to be members of this previously all male organization.

Methods and Procedures

In the winter of 1980, a 43 item questionnaire was developed that elicited information pertaining to the objectives of the study. On March 17, 1980, 1340 questionnaires were mailed, of which 495 were presidents (375 male, 120 female), 420 were vice-presidents for program (291 male, 129 female), and 425 were vice-presidents for membership (316 male, 109 female). Slightly more than 70% of the questionnaires were returned. When incomplete and unusable questionnaires were removed, the remaining 894, or 67% of the total pool, comprised the analysis sample. Of this group, 657 (70.1%) were male and 267 (29.9%) were female.

The data for the study were tabulated by frequency of responses. The analysis was made on percentages for the total sample and by sex using the SPSS computer program. The level of significance was .05.

## Analysis and Interpretation of Demographic Data

There were significant differences between the sexes in all demographic variables at the 0.05 level or better with the exception of age and the type of institution at which the individual was employed. Those factors relating to child care and household duties were very significantly different.

Age. Most of the respondents (52.3%) were between the age of 41 and 55 years, with the second largest group (18.9%) between the age of 36-40. Only 15.8% were under 35 years of age and 13.0% were 56 years of age or older.

Marital Status. Of the total responses, 83.3% reported that they are currently married and 73.5% have been married only once. Of the 16.7% who are single, 34.2% are female as opposed to 9.3% male.

Family and Household Responsibilities. The modal number of children is two, with 68.6% having at least two children. Nearly one-third of the females (31.5%) reported that they had no children, as compared to only 13.1% of the males.

Since some studies have indicated that marriage and family impact upon careers of women, the questionnaire included two questions relating to household and child care responsibilities. Only 8.1% of the sample indicated they had hired help with household duties and even fewer (4.7%) employed outside help for child-care responsibilities.

As could have been expected, 62.6% of the females, as opposed to 8.9% of the males, said they had total or major responsibility for household

duties. Also, 26.6% of the females had all or most of the responsibility for child care, as compared to only 3.2% of the males. Nearly one-half of the males responded that they share equally with their spouse in both areas (48.8% for household and 47.4% for child care). At the same time, less than one-fourth of the females (21.0% for household and 21.3% for child care) responded that these responsibilities were shared equally with their spouse.

It should be noted that only 72.8% of the respondents answered the question relating to child care. At the same time, 18.6% indicated they had no children. It could be assumed that the remaining number of the sample no longer have children living at home, especially since 13.0% of the sample are 56 years of age or older.

Education. As can be seen in Table 2, there is very little difference in the educational level of the respondents when analyzed by sex. The dominant degree for males is the doctorate while the master's plus is the most prevalent for females. When combined, 82% of the respondents have completed academic work beyond the master's degree.

The largest percentage (40.4%) indicated their area of specialization as administration, followed by curriculum and instruction. When compared by sex, 45% of the males specialized in administration and 15.5% listed curriculum and instruction. The females studied in the areas of administration (29.6%) and curriculum and instruction (22.2%).

Any other area of specialization was represented by less than 7.0% of the sample. These included such things as counseling, special education and subject-matter disciplines.

TABLE 2. Level of Education by Sex

| | Degree | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Bachelors | Masters | Masters+ | Doctorate |
| Male | | | | |
| # | 9 | 87 | 234 | 296 |
| % | 1.4 | 13.9 | 37.4 | 47.3 |
| Female | | | | |
| # | 10 | 55 | 107 | 95 |
| % | 3.7 | 20.6 | 40.1 | 35.6 |
| Total | | | | |
| # | 19 | 142 | 341 | 391 |
| % | 2.1 | 15.9 | 38.2 | 43.8 |

Employment. More than one-half of the officers (52.1%) are employed in a public elementary or secondary school, with the next largest group employed in higher education (36.5%). The ratio of male to female in each of the categories was essentially the same as the ratio of the respondents (70% male to 30% female). No attempt was made to determine level of employment in the public school sector. For higher education, 25.8% of the total sample were in 4-year public institutions, 6.1% in 4-year private institutions and 4.6% in community colleges.

Nearly one-half of the respondents (48.1%) indicated that their current position was that of administrator with teacher ranked in second place (32.4%). It was interesting to note that the majority of the men (53.6%) were in administration, and the largest percentage (37.8%) of the women were teachers.

Nearly one-fourth of the respondents have been employed between 16 and 20 years. It is apparent that men have been employed longer than women, with 65.9% of the men having 16+ years of experience as compared to 55.4% of the women. This may imply a delayed or interrupted career pattern for women, since there were only 1.1% fewer women than men who were 41 years of age or older.

## Data Related to Phi Delta Kappa and Other Professional Activities

Except for the variables relating to number of years of PDK membership and number of contributions to the Educational Foundation, there were no significant differences between men and women in their professional activities.

More than one-half of the officers surveyed (56%) have been a member

of PDK for more than 5 years. Of this group, 71.6% were male and 19.5% were female. As expected, 80.5% of the females have belonged to PDK five years or less.

The size of the chapter does not seem to impact upon whether the top officers are male or female. The only difference which can be noted is that a slightly higher percentage of men are officers in chapters having less than 60 members, while a slightly higher percentage of women hold office in chapters with 300 or more members.

Professional Activities. The largest percentage (30.1%) of those responding indicate that they belong to 4 to 5 other professional organizations, with no significant difference in the number of organizational memberships between men and women. Also, sex is not a factor in the number of professional meetings attended (other than PDK) in the last two years. Neither does sex seem to be a factor in the amount of current research expected to lead to a publication or in the number of articles published in the last two years. Overall, only 35.5% of those responding indicated that they are currently engaged in research which will lead to a publication (34.9% for males and 36.7% for females) and only 34.3% reported that they have had at least one article published in the last two years (35.5% for males and 31.5% for females). A slightly larger percentage (46.1%) of those responding have presented at least one paper at an academic or professional meeting in the last two years. Only 27.7% of the women and 29.0% of the men stated that they had received funding for non-PDK research or projects.

PDK Activities. Other than holding office in a local chapter, the

respondents of this study are not very active in PDK activities. Less than 1.0% have ever published in any PDK related publications. Only 15.5% have ever been awarded or participated in a PDK funded project or grant. Eighty-five percent have never received an award from a local PDK chapter. Only 29.1% have ever attended a PDK Biennial Council, and only 20.7% attended as a voting delegate. Travel Seminars were attended by only 7.3%.

There were only two activities in which more than one-half of the respondents had participated: district meetings and contributions to the Educational Foundation. Fifty-eight percent had attended a district meeting, with most of these attending no more than two times. Of the total sample, 54.5% indicated they have contributed to the Educational Foundation. The difference in number of contributions made by males and females was significant at the 0.001 level, with 63.3% of the females and 50.7% of the males reporting contributions.

There was no significant difference in number of awards or recognitions received by a chapter when analyzed by the sex of the elected officer. Only 36% of the chapters had received at least one award during the period in which the respondent had been in office. When broken down by sex, 38.4% of the males and 30.3% of the females reported their chapter had received an award.

Approximately one-tenth (9.5%) of those surveyed said that they had participated in an organized campaign to change some aspect of PDK International. Of this 9.5%, 65.9% were male and 34.1% were female. Nearly one-third (30.9%) had participated in activities to change the local PDK chapters, with 68.1% of this group being male and 31.9% being female.

Over three-fourths (78.4%) of the group felt that they were elected to office because their colleagues had confidence in their leadership ability. A slightly larger percentage (82.0%) of the women indicated that reason than did men (76.9%). Only 1.8% said that they had actively sought the position they held.

Perceptions of Women in Leadership Positions

Most of the perception/opinion questions on the survey were designed to investigate the changes which have taken place in PDK since women were approved for membership. While 90.9% of the respondents indicated that, if given a choice today, they would prefer that PDK be co-educational, 7.7% would prefer that PDK be all male. Of the group preferring co-educational, 97.8% of the females responded positively, as opposed to 88% of the males.

When asked about the proportion of women holding office (either elected or appointed) relative to the proportion of women in the chapter, most of the respondents felt the representation was about right. Interestingly, a slightly higher percentage of woman than men felt that women were proportionately represented in elected offices.

The survey listed eleven specific areas of chapter activities and asked the respondents to indicate whether or not any changes had taken place since 1977. There was no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female respondents for any of the areas. The largest percentage of the respondents perceived no change in the following:

1. Number of committees chaired by men
2. Number of men presenting programs
3. Number of socials

4. Number of meetings

5. Amount of emphasis on research

6. Amount of involvement with International PDK programs and projects

Those areas of chapter activities in which the respondents felt that there had been a change since 1977 were:

1. A decrease in the number of males elected to office

2. An increase in the number of females elected to office

3. An increase in the number of females chairing committees

4. An increase in the number of females presenting programs

5. An increase in the amount of money spent by the chapter

Summary and Conclusions

The purposes of this study were to compare the professional and personal characteristics of the men and women in PDK who hold the top elected positions in local chapters, and to study the perceptions of these leaders of the impact of allowing women to be members of PDK. Listed below are the conclusions made as a result of the study.

1. There are statistically significant differences at the .05 level in most of the personal data of males and females who hold the top elected offices in local chapters of PDK, with the data indicating that:

   a. More of the females are single than are the males

   b. Nearly one-third of the females had no children, as compared to only about one-tenth of the males

   c. While the ages of males and females are comparable, males have more years of experience than females, which may indicate a pattern of career interruption for the females

   d. More females than males have either all or most of the responsibility for household and child care duties

e. Males tend to hold a higher academic degree than females

f. More males hold administrative positions than females, while more females than males are teachers. These positions are in line with the areas of specialization for males and females in their highest degree

2. With the exception of females contributing more often than males to the Educational Foundation of PDK and the number of years of PDK membership, there were no statistically significant differences in the professional activities of males and females who hold the top elected offices in local chapters of PDK. The findings show that:

a. Both males and females felt that they were elected to their positions because of colleague confidence in their leadership abilities

b. A very slightly higher percentage of females are actively involved in research, while a slightly higher percentage of the males have published at least one article in the last two years

c. While females have more household and child care responsibilities, they still are as professionally active as their male counterparts, although neither appears to be very active when such items as grants, publications, research projects and papers presented are used as benchmarks of professional activity

3. This study indicates that there seems to have been little impact on the goals, purposes, and structure of PDK as a result of females being accepted into membership. What changes, if any, seem to have occurred on the local level. Those impacts which have been felt tend to relate more to the increased professionalism of the organization, as indicated by the number of respondents who felt that the admission of women widened the scope of interests and provided an opportunity for both men and women to work together in one professional organization.

Although most of the respondents indicated that they felt that PDK should be co-educational, and that the overall perception of women

belonging to PDK was positive, there were many examples of statements which carried overtones of sexism. Many of the male respondents' statements implied a retrospective acceptance of women, while many of the women expressed enthusiastic eagerness on their part to be included in the organization.

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